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ABSTRACT

This study examined the academic labor market experiences of 393 recipients of Ford Minority Fellows, Mellon Fellows, and certain Spencer Fellows who had recently completed doctoral degrees. Of the original 393 individuals, 78 percent responded to telephone interviews that focused on their hiring experiences relative to eight prototypes, which ranged from "sought after" to "never applied for faculty position." Based on the data, the report addresses and debunks five "myths" of the academic labor market and concludes that institutions can raise the level of qualified candidates by improving the search and hiring process, and by considering nontenure alternatives. The report sees opportunities for diversity decreasing in the future and suggests fellowships as a way to provide important networking links. Additionally, it sets out some strategies and principles of good hiring practice for institutions and suggests also that institutions provide graduate students with support in preparing for the job market and be ethical and honest when opportunities for academic posts are limited. (Contains 25 references.) (CH)

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The Pipeline for Achieving Faculty Diversity: Debunking the Myths

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This paper was presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education held in Memphis, Tennessee, October 31 - November 3, 1996. This paper was reviewed by ASHE and was judged to be of high quality and of interest to others concerned with higher education. It has therefore been selected to be included in the ERIC collection of ASHE conference papers.

Executive Summary
The Pipeline for Achieving Faculty Diversity:
Debunking the myths

It was predicted that due to faculty retirements, the academic labor market would open up in the 1990s -- allowing individuals with terminal degrees a relatively easy time finding academic employment. Financial retrenchment and the elimination of mandatory retirement, however, seem to have conspired to reduce the number of academic jobs available. This leads us to the following question -- what is currently happening in the academic labor market?

While the market appears tight, there is an additional issue that must be addressed -- the need to diversify the faculty. Within higher education, the stated reason for not diversifying the faculty rests on labor market theories of supply and demand. Citing statistics on the relatively few numbers of persons of color with doctorates in various fields, many assert that there are too few faculty of color available for hire (the supply argument). A corollary of the supply argument is that a bidding war exists that results from the high demand for faculty of color along with the limited supply. In this context, "ordinary" institutions feel they are not comparably rich enough, located well enough, or prestigious enough to attract the few candidates who are in such high demand.

The presence of the bidding war paradigm has never been empirically substantiated beyond anecdotal evidence and the obvious movements of well known scholars. Many faculty, postdoctoral fellows, and administrators of color deny that the typical hiring experience of minority scholars is one of bidding wars. Rather, these individuals argue that the hiring pipeline for minority scholars is more likely characterized by underemployment or the same limited market experienced more generally. In addition, several academics have written articles that confirm the perceptions of the difficulties minority faculty face and the presence of discriminatory hiring practices. These forceful views suggest that the lack of diversity in the faculty is a function of the hiring process and attitudes of institutions -- not simply the limited number of faculty of color.

We need to know more about the current job market for faculty, including faculty of color. Without this knowledge, perceptions held by academics and administrators of color will heighten anger and cynicism concerning the sincerity of higher education's commitment to diversity. At the same time, unverified beliefs held by faculty search committees may leave many campuses engaged in self-fulfilling prophecies regarding minority faculty recruitment. This report presents the results of a year long study that responds to these issues and identifies strategies that might be used to address the information obtained.

Methodology

The study examines the experiences of scholars who recently earned doctorates. Ford Minority Fellows, Mellon Fellows, and a subset of Spencer Fellows were included. These prestigious programs were chosen because they allow us to reflect on the hiring process from a national lens, while looking at the hiring experiences of both minority and majority men and women; they allows us to involve several hundred scholars of color from a variety of academic fields; and, because they allow us to control for questions of quality. We are therefore providing a conservative test of the hypothesis of the bidding war paradigm for faculty of color. We expect that this pool of doctoral recipients should have among the best experiences because they have been "labeled" as particularly successful.

To answer the research questions, 393 recipients of Ford, Mellon, and Spencer Fellowships who completed their Ph.D. since 1989 were invited to participate in the project by agreeing to a telephone interview. Interviews focused on the individual's experiences on the academic labor market including: background characteristics, number of positions applied for, limits on the search process, number of interviews, job offers, and factors that may have helped or hindered them in the job market. Participants were also asked about whether they had the opportunity to negotiate packages, whether they saw institutions "bidding" for them, how seriously they were taken in the job market, and whether they had any advice to share with the higher education community on these issues.

Participants

Out of 393 originally included, 298 interviews (78%) were completed. The race/ethnic breakdown of the participants was as follows: 26% African American, 4% Asian Pacific Islander, 34% European American, 33% Latino, and 3% Native American. Approximately half of the sample were women. The mean year for achieving the Ph.D. was 1992. While the average age was 36, the ages of the sample range between 27 and 56 years of age. In the total group, 43% were in the humanities, 26% were in the social sciences, 20% were in the sciences, 4% in education, and 4% in fields related to ethnic and/or gender studies. While few of the participants were located in ethnic studies or women's studies, well over one third did serious work in these areas located in traditional disciplines. In terms of their doctoral work, 93% of the participants attended Research I institutions, most of which were the most prestigious universities. The distribution of baccalaureate granting institutions was only slightly more diverse.

Prototypes

Eight prototypes of experience in the labor market were developed to facilitate answering questions about how experiences differed by group characteristics, field etc. These 8 prototypes focus on the primary questions of the study -- the degree to which people experienced levels of choice and competition for their talents in getting their current positions.

Prototype 1: Sought After

Individuals in this group received personal solicitations to apply for positions in addition to having a relatively high degree of success within the normal application process. Only 27 people in the study (9%) could be characterized as being in Prototype 1. In virtually every case, the number of solicitations was from only two or three institutions. Given the market, this is still a highly desirable position to be in, but it does not suggest that these 27 individuals were picking their ideal work locations.

Prototype 2: Good Experience After Applying

Individuals who conducted successful academic searches, had multiple offers, but who were not initially recruited fit into Prototype 2. Many of the individuals in this category were able to negotiate their packages and some were the beneficiaries of bidding wars. For prototype 2, 48 people (16%) were included. The distribution among men and women of color and men and European American men and women was fairly evenly distributed.

Prototype 3: Single but Good Choice

This category captures the experiences of those individuals who had only one choice of faculty position, but the choice was either their "ideal" position or was a sufficiently desirable one such that the person felt pleased with the outcome. Often persons in this group were solicited for positions before they were fully in the labor market and were made an offer that was not in competition with any others. 13% of those interviewed were placed in this prototype.

Prototype 4: Limited Choice

Persons grouped in Prototype 4 applied for faculty positions and received a limited number of offers -- usually two -- that might not have been their ideal choices. The 27 scholars in this category, representing 9% of the sample, are all currently employed in tenure track faculty positions.

Prototype 5: Took What They Could Get -- The Default

Individuals in this prototype applied for faculty positions and only received one offer. In contrast to those in Prototype 3, the jobs offered to these individuals were not their ideal positions. These individuals had extremely limited options. Some of the individuals in this category applied for all relevant positions across the country, while others limited their searches in some way. There are 59 individuals in this prototype, representing 20% of the sample.

Prototype 6: Unemployed, Part time, or Temporary Faculty Positions

All members of this prototype unsuccessfully applied for tenure track positions. Individuals in this category are currently unemployed, working in part-time faculty positions or are in full-time non-tenure track faculty positions. Understandably, many of the 33 individuals in this category expressed frustration and disappointment. Nonetheless, respondents remain hopeful that they will eventually be offered a tenure-track job, all the while considering the alternatives open to them if their hopes do not materialize. Those in prototype 6 represented 11% of those interviewed.

Prototype 7: Not Faculty, But Applied for Faculty Positions

Persons in this category applied for academic positions but are currently not working as faculty members. These individuals fit into two broad categories: those that did not receive faculty offers and thus obtained a post-doc or an industry position and those that received faculty offers but for whatever reason chose to pursue other employment options. There are 18 individuals included in prototype 7, representing 6% of the sample. Most blame the academic labor market for their failure to secure a faculty position.

Prototype 8: Not Faculty, Never Applied for Faculty Positions

Individuals in this category did not apply to academic positions and are therefore either working as post-docs or in industry. There were 49 individuals in this prototype, representing 16% of the sample. For those in science, the current expectation regarding the importance of having a post-doc position stopped them from even applying. Several individuals took jobs outside of academia for financial reasons, while others chose non-academic employment because they were burnt out, because they found other work options more stimulating, or because of family constraints. Many indicated that they would like to eventually re-enter the academy, if the opportunity presents itself and if they can afford it.

Conclusions

Overall, this group of prestigious fellowship recipients is, as would be expected, doing well. The vast majority, regardless of race or gender, are in regular faculty positions or in postdoctoral

positions appropriate to their fields. In fact, 70% of the entire group are currently in faculty positions, with 17% in post doctoral appointments (mostly scientists), 4% in corporate positions, 3% unemployed and 6% in a variety of other positions including educational administration. Of those in faculty positions, 92% are in regular tenure track positions or in faculty posts at Ivy league institutions that do not have tenure.

By and large, faculty members obtained their positions by rather traditional means. They attended prestigious graduate institutions, they delivered papers at conferences, published, and struggled to get known. Many had teaching experiences, though found (to their regret) teaching to be less critical to search committees than publishing. Many spread their net wide and settled for what they could get. Few had the experience of being "sought after." Those with limited mobility or those who were more selective in their search found connections, past acquaintances, and prior institutional affiliations to be central.

The purpose of this study, however, was to address a number of propositions -- propositions that we will now label as myths -- concerning the academic labor market for recent doctoral recipients.

Myth #1:
Because there are so few faculty of color in the pipeline, they are being sought out by numerous institutions that must compete against one another in the hiring process.

The reality:
The supply and bidding arguments are grossly overstated. Even in this highly select group of doctoral recipients, the difficulties of the job market and the limited number of options is more the pattern than not. Only 11% of our scholars of color, were characterized in prototype 1 -- were sought out. Moreover, few of even this select group could be characterized as having institutions bid for them. While institutions continue to describe their inability to find or attract candidates, many candidates are sitting in positions for which they had no choice and, in the case of science, in "holding patterns."

Theoretical frameworks that assume that supply and demand will predict an individual's experience were clearly not supported by the study. Such frameworks suggest that the fewer persons in a field, the more in demand they will be. The results of the study, while not precise, suggest that scholars who introduce ethnic studies expertise within a discipline are more in demand than those whose studies have been more traditionally defined. Scholars of color who are in traditional areas

like math or science find themselves at a continuing disadvantage in the current competitive job market.

Myth 1a:
This myth focuses especially on the supply and demand in the sciences for faculty of color. The scarcity of faculty of color in the sciences, means that few are available and those that are available are in high demand.

The reality:
The majority of scientists in this study, all of whom are persons of color, continue to pursue postdoctoral study and are not pursued for faculty positions by interested institutions. Those who have attempted to find faculty positions have not been sought out or pursued. Indeed, many scientists were quite concerned about finding jobs and others had already left academe for industry because of their inability to find positions.

Myth #2:
The kind of scholars represented in this study, both because of their competitive positioning in the market, and their elite education, are only interested in being considered by the most prestigious institutions making it virtually impossible for other institutions to recruit them.

The reality:
Our participants profile a wide range of desired positions, regions of the country, and institutional types. Some of these choices were based on limited mobility but others were based on the environment the person wished to be in, a desire to teach a diverse student body, or the desire to be part of an institution that had a mission related to the individual's professional goals. It was not uncommon for participants to express regret that they had not been recruited by a regional institution with which they had some affinity.

Myth #3:
Individuals are being continually recruited by wealthy and prestigious institutions with resources with which ordinary institutions cannot compete. This creates a revolving door that limits progress for any single institution in diversifying its faculty.

The reality:
Some faculty do leave institutions and continue to be sought out, particularly those in prototype one and two. However, this occurred infrequently within our sample. We found that academics

are not likely to move frequently simply because of monetary incentives. When people moved, the reasons often focused more on unresolved issues with the institution, dual career choices, and questions of fit than they did on financial packages and institutional prestige.

Myth #4:
Faculty of color are leaving academe altogether for more lucrative positions in government and industry.

The reality:
We were able to include in our study those who have left academe for positions outside. For scientists, a common explanation included the need to establish a career before the age of 40. The common expectation of multiple postdoctoral appointments delayed career development too long. Others spoke of inhumane search processes that left them feeling unappreciated while others noted the difficult job market. Thus, choices to leave academe were as often a function of what was wrong with academe as it was what was right outside.

Myth #5
Campuses are so focused on diversifying the faculty, that heterosexual white males have no chance.

The Reality:
In our sample, it was clear that European American males were slightly underrepresented in prototype #1 and slightly over represented in prototype #6. Nevertheless, the vast majority, like the rest of those in the study were highly successful. In most of the cases where European American men had difficulty finding a regular faculty appointment, the fields in which they specialized had virtually no openings. European American men who had expertise related to diversity had a significant advantage on the job market.

The study also highlights the following conclusions:

1. Because of the limited job market in many fields, campuses have sufficient choice among applicants to be able to raise the level of requirements for "qualified candidates" by demanding candidates who attended the most elite institutions, have significant publications during doctoral work, and who have increased technical specialization. While our participants satisfied these criteria in many cases, many observed that others who are attending less elite institutions would be at a severe disadvantage.

2. The search and hiring process continues largely unchanged . The results of this study suggest that while increased numbers of administrators see the value of diversifying the faculties of American colleges and universities, faculty, particularly in some fields, are resistant to rethinking how they recruit and evaluate candidates. The lack of diversity on search committees continues to limit the potential for introducing new perspectives to the process of evaluation.

3. There are strategies that graduate institutions can use to encourage and nurture students in approaching the current market. From engaging new developments in the fields of scholarship to becoming involved professionally, students will need to be prepared to engage what is clearly a difficult job market.

4. Many institutions follow a rather passive approach to developing pools for the search process, relying on letters and advertising. Successful searches require the development of personal connections, networks of people who are in needed areas of scholarship, and a willingness to hire candidates for the perspectives they bring rather than the groups they are supposed to represent.

5. Young scholars find tenure track positions the primary goal of their searches and look to achieving tenure as a time when they can truly play a leadership role in their institution by offering differing perspectives. The current discussions within higher education of alternatives to tenure raise potential problems for the attractiveness of higher education in the future.

6. The climate for faculty of color in institutions remains uncomfortable and difficult, no matter under what circumstances the individual was hired. Thus, institutions that feel they have made great efforts to hire someone may resent the lack of appreciation even as the scholar finds himself or herself not taken very seriously when an effort is made to participate in institutional change.

The mutually contradictory perceptions -- the supply and undersupply arguments are alive and well and to only a modest degree simultaneously true. There are some faculty who are sought out and who can negotiate their positions. But there are also many more for whom a single offer was typical. Moreover, in the sciences we see a troubling and wasteful use of talent. The perennial post doc has now raised the years of training and technical skills for faculty most of whom will not end up teaching at research universities where such skills might be essential. The current myths do great damage and weaken the integrity of institutional efforts at hiring as well. It leaves open the

genuine possibility that in all too many cases, the rhetoric of diversity is just that. At the same time, it is clear that the current job market makes the strategies for hiring and the strategies for continuing to encourage diverse groups of people to enter academe quite complicated and troubling. What is imperative is that institutions must not fall back on the myths -- they are untrue, they are damaging, and they misname the problem and the potential solutions.

Implications

The current job market

This study raises some troubling questions for policy and practice. Because of the current job market there are fewer opportunities for faculty than had been predicted. As a result, many of the participants in this study were not always clear that they would encourage faculty careers for others. At the same time the need to encourage scholars of color remains and is urgent. If future candidates avoid academic careers, the efforts at diversity will be even more significantly jeopardized than they are now. Some of the myths may, indeed, become realities.

The continuing analysis of the future needs for faculty based on projections about enrollments along with faculty retirements seems to be persuasive that there will be a demand for faculty that requires continuing development of scholars. This study suggests however that the opportunity for scholars of color will not necessarily grow with the shifting job market unless there are changes within institutional practice to complement the change in the pipeline. In light of the continuing need to bring diverse perspectives to academe, the future must be carefully negotiated in ways that address the job market ethically but that also continue to encourage graduate education for students of color.

Fellowships

Fellowships continue to be extraordinarily important. Not only do they provide the financial support to facilitate completion of doctoral study, but they also emerge as important networking links and signs of legitimization. For postdoctoral fellowships, participants had much greater flexibility in options for laboratories and universities when they brought funding with them. One of the implications of this study is that foundations might build in more opportunities for past and present recipients to network so that they might serve as the champions for individuals when regular practice is not as responsive as it might otherwise be.

Principles of good practice for hiring institutions

While the focus of this study was not on institutional practices, the study did reveal some of the strategies, approaches, and attitudes that seemed to be the most effective.

- In recruiting faculty candidates, respondents indicated that the most successful approach involved telephone calls and letters in which the search committee or administrator seemed to be familiar with the candidates areas of interest and how these fit the job description of the position. Form letters were less powerful and often ignored. Having search committee members who were familiar with the candidate was also instrumental in providing important links between the candidate and the institution.

- Strong administrative action was often cited as a key element in a candidate being offered the position. In the long run, however, a close consensus between the search committee and the administration will be very important for the long term success of the candidates.

- The level of an institutions commitment to diversity is important for its credibility and for the seriousness it will be given by candidates. Many scholars, of all racial and ethnic backgrounds, perceived that institutional efforts to diversify were more talk than action. Many felt that without continuing pressure, institutional efforts to achieve faculty diversity will decrease. Current efforts to diversify the curriculum and scholarship have created increasing areas of expertise for which faculty of color are more likely to be sought out.

- Our interviews indicate that affirmative action is supported with some ambivalence. People want to be hired for their scholarship, their abilities, and not solely for their ethnicity. Many faculty of color had little respect or interest in those schools that sent out general mailings urging minorities or white women to apply. It was viewed by many as insulting and reflected little genuine interest in the candidates themselves. At the same time, many spoke eloquently about the fear that the current backlash against affirmative action would reduce any institutional incentives to diversify and would work against future faculty of color.

- The challenge of dual career relationships and dual career academics was a common theme for these scholars as they approached the job market. It appeared, however, that many institutions were not prepared to assist candidates in dealing with the issue. Those campuses that were prepared to assist partners in finding positions or in connecting with possibilities in the area were taken more seriously than those that left it up to the couple.

- Once hired, many respondents noted the need for help and support during the critical first years in the university. While all seemed to feel the heavy burden or preparing new class and trying to get a research program off the ground, women and minority members often experienced a disproportionately difficult burden associated with excessive committee assignments and student counseling. As several respondents emphasized, getting a job in the academy is only the first step. Succeeding in the multiple responsibilities of that job over the first seven years in order to achieve tenure is a much more challenging proposition.

Principles of good practice for graduate institutions

In our interviews, we asked participants if they wished to send a message to the higher education community about their experiences. One of the most common themes had to do with the limited opportunities for academic posts and what it is graduate institutions should do. Many, of course, suggested that graduate programs should limit or discontinue doctoral programs particularly in fields where there were no openings. While this strategy has severe limitations particularly given the erratic quality of the job market from year to year and the continuing projections about the need for faculty of the future, a response must be developed which is ethical and honest about prevailing conditions.

- Many respondents urged graduate institutions to inform students early in their graduate career about the realities of doctoral level employment in their field. In addition, they suggested that graduate students be given specific preparation in job search skills and in the management of the entire job search process in order to relieve the psychological stress experienced by many. Almost all of the participants, whether or not their job search was successful, mentioned that they wished they had known more about the process and their prospects at the outset.

- Students who had "champions" were much more likely to be successful in finding their desired position. The most successful graduate programs were ones where individual relationships and departmental programs were available to provide the graduate student support in preparing for the job market. The most exemplary programs helped students prepare for the interview, encouraged and even required presentations at conferences, provided support for publishing during the doctoral program, and were especially aggressive in helping the student network.

- Many graduate students were not informed about how new developments in their fields were being incorporated into the changing college curricula of today. Thus, areas of study were often pursued independent of needs on college campuses. The most successful of our participants clearly pursued areas of interest related to diversity and found themselves

experiencing a more vigorous job market than others. Graduate programs must be sensitive to the emerging needs on college campuses both from a scholarly and pedagogical perspective.

- Respondents indicated that they were discouraged from pursuing non-academic positions. Many of the participants comments that if they planned on pursuing a career other than a faculty position at a research university they were often not taken as seriously. It would appear that if graduate study is not be curtailed, then considering broader sets of desirable options from teaching at different kinds of institutions to other kinds of applied research would be important. To do this well, graduate institutions will need to develop the networks and opportunities to make these choices a reality.

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